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## 215.14

### Precertification of Pregnant Women

#### Overview

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**Introduction** Precertification of pregnant women allows agencies to serve pregnant women as soon as they identify themselves as wishing to receive WIC services. Travel barriers will be removed for participants living in rural areas, increasing the likelihood that pregnant women will receive services within the 10-day time frame.

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**Definition: Precertification** A pregnant woman may be precertified based on information provided by a referring professional.

Note: In USDA policy guidance, this process is referred to as presumptive eligibility for pregnant women. The Iowa WIC Program chooses to identify this process as precertification to prevent confusion about presumptive eligibility determination for Medicaid services for pregnant women.

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**When precertification is allowed** Precertification of pregnant women using referral data is allowed for healthy ambulatory pregnant women. Precertification in the WIC clinic is also an acceptable option for pregnant women when a regular certification appointment is not available.

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**Documentation of identity, address and income** In order to comply with federal policy guidance about documenting proof of identity, address and income, precertification is limited to two groups of pregnant women:

- Women who are adjunctively eligible based on Medicaid eligibility, and
- Women who have applied for another program where proof of income was provided by the applicant.

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## Overview, Continued

<b>Certification appointment required to continue</b>	The precertification process permits the issuance of one month of food benefits in the absence of health information. A certification appointment is required to continue receiving benefits.																				
<b>Option for local agencies</b>	Precertification of pregnant women is an option for local agencies. Potential referral agencies include public health nursing, physician's offices, Department of Human Services, community action programs, family planning programs, and Title V (Maternal Health) agencies.																				
<b>Food package</b>	<p>Assign an appropriate model food package based on her pregnancy status (i.e., singleton pregnancy or multiple pregnancy).</p> <p><u>Note:</u> If the applicant identifies food sensitivity or intolerance to any foods in the WIC food package, a CPA must contact her and then write the appropriate food package prescription.</p>																				
<b>FNS Policy Reference</b>	<p>The following policy provides guidance and direction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPSF-1: WC-94-11-P</li> </ul>																				
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## Requirements for Using Referral Data

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### Written agreement needed

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) must be developed between the referral agency and local WIC Program before implementing precertification of pregnant women. This MOU must specify, at a minimum, the following:

- Identification of referral agency staff who will be involved,
- Required training for staff involved in the project,
- The role of each organization,
- The processing time frames for faxed data forms,
- Confidentiality issues,
- How the agreement may be modified, and
- Termination rights of both parties.

Note: A sample agreement is included in this policy on pages 15-16. The state WIC office must approve any agreements before implementing precertification procedures.

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### The referral agency's role

The referral agency must designate staff to:

- Assess potential eligibility for WIC services,
- Collect data on a standard form provided by WIC,
- Document proof of income, identity and address;
- Provide basic information about how to use eWIC card,
- Fax the form to the local WIC Program,
- Store the completed forms in a confidential manner until the forms are mailed to the local WIC Program, and
- Promote breastfeeding as the optimal way to feed babies.

Note: Staff must provide information about where the applicant can complete the application process if they cannot document proof of income.

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### The local WIC Program's role

The local WIC Program will:

- Train referral agency personnel,
  - Determine the next step for referral agencies when they cannot or do not document proof of income,
  - Review the data provided by referral agency,
  - Determine the eligibility status of the applicant,
  - Issue food benefits to those found eligible, and
  - Provide breastfeeding information and support.
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## Requirements for Using Referral Data, Continued

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### **Training requirements**

The training provided for the referral agency staff by local WIC staff must address the following topics:

- Overall goals of precertification,
  - Data collection,
  - How applicants can complete the application process if proof of income is not available,
  - Breastfeeding promotion and support,
  - Confidentiality requirements,
  - How to use the eWIC card,
  - Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant, and
  - Basic information about the WIC Program.
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### **Breastfeeding promotion and support**

If infant feeding is discussed, referral agency personnel are encouraged to use open-ended questions to explore her attitude and knowledge about breastfeeding. This approach quickly identifies real and perceived barriers and helps staff provide targeted educational messages to address those issues. It also keeps the “door open” to provide more information about breastfeeding. This is much more effective than asking a woman how she plans to feed her baby and then trying to promote breastfeeding when she already stated her intent to formula-feed.

The WIC Program produces several client education brochures about breastfeeding. Referral agencies can obtain these brochures from the local WIC agency. A camera-ready copy is also available at no charge if the agency chooses to print their own supply.

The referral agency is required to provide each applicant with a copy of the brochure, *Thinking About Breastfeeding*.

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## Precertification Using Referral Data

### Introduction

Pregnant women can be precertified using referral data.

### At the referral agency

The referral agency will use the following procedure to share data:

Step	Action
1	Identify potential applicants through patient history or interview.
2	Provide the applicant with the leaflet, What You Need to Know About WIC & Your Pregnancy, and ask if she is interested in applying.  <u>Note:</u> It is important to state that the WIC Program makes the final determination of eligibility. Eligibility should not be presumed to be automatic or guaranteed.
3	Collect the required data on the form, Pregnancy WIC Precertification Application.
4	Review the section on the form about the need for a certification appointment and ask her to sign and date the form. Encourage her to make the WIC appointment right away or assist her with making an appointment.
5	Review Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant (on the back of the form) and obtain her signature.
6	Provide education about how to use the eWIC card, document the method used for education and directions for benefits issuance, and sign the form.
7	Ask if she has medical appointment in the next month. If she does, give her a copy of the purple Nutrition Health History Card for Women and describe how WIC can use data from her medical provider. Encourage her to ask her provider to record data on the card so she can take it to her WIC appointment. This will save her time in the clinic and reduce duplication of services.
8	Provide a copy of the brochure, <i>Thinking About Breastfeeding</i> .
9	Fax the completed form to the local WIC Program.
10	Mail the original form to the local WIC Program. <u>Notes:</u> Referral agencies may collect forms for several days and mail them in batches. The local WIC agency will scan the Pregnancy WIC Precertification Application and Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant, with the signature.

Continued on next page

## Precertification Using Referral Data, Continued

### Process forms in a timely way

The WIC staff will process the faxed forms according to the time frames identified in the MOU with the referral agency. WIC agencies are strongly encouraged to process forms received during the week within 24 hours. However, clinic and staffing schedules will influence processing times. Faxed forms received on Friday afternoons will be processed on the following Monday.

### At the WIC office

The table below describes the procedure in the WIC office.

Step	Action								
1	<p>Review income data and use the table below to determine the next step.</p> <table> <tr> <th>IF...</th><th>THEN...</th></tr> <tr> <td>Income eligible <u>and</u> no family members are on WIC</td><td>Create a record for a new family in the data system.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Income eligible <u>and</u> family members are on WIC</td><td>Retrieve the family's record and update the woman's status to include being a participant</td></tr> <tr> <td>Not income eligible</td><td>Follow Policy 215.08.</td></tr> </table>	IF...	THEN...	Income eligible <u>and</u> no family members are on WIC	Create a record for a new family in the data system.	Income eligible <u>and</u> family members are on WIC	Retrieve the family's record and update the woman's status to include being a participant	Not income eligible	Follow Policy 215.08.
IF...	THEN...								
Income eligible <u>and</u> no family members are on WIC	Create a record for a new family in the data system.								
Income eligible <u>and</u> family members are on WIC	Retrieve the family's record and update the woman's status to include being a participant								
Not income eligible	Follow Policy 215.08.								
2	<p>Complete the data entry using information from the form.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> A CPA must assign the food package. If the applicant has a food sensitivity or intolerance to any foods in the WIC food package, a CPA must contact the applicant to identify an appropriate food package.</p>								
3	If mailing the eWIC card, issue benefits and assemble the enclosures.								
4	Scan the signed Pregnancy WIC Precertification Application and Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant, and file in Focus.								

Note: The application date is the date the form is processed by the WIC agency.

### Proration Override

When issuing benefits for a precertification, a proration override may be completed to ensure the participant has adequate benefits prior to returning to complete a full certification appointment within 30 days.

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## Precertification Using Referral Data, Continued

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**Missing  
information on  
faxed forms**

Proof of identity, address and income must be documented in order to precertify the applicant. If this documentation is missing, contact the applicant and tell her what documentation she must bring to the WIC agency or the designated local WIC contact to complete the process.

Note: Depending on the local agency schedule and the woman's access to transportation, it may be a better use of everyone's time to complete a face-to-face certification appointment when applicants bring the required documentation to the WIC agency.

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**Standard form**

A standard form, Pregnancy WIC Precertification Application, is available from ISAIC. See Policy 215.14A for a copy of the form.

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**Mailing eWIC  
cards**

See page 8 for information about mailing the eWIC card.

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## Mailing the eWIC card

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**Procedure** Mail the eWIC card in an envelope marked “Return Service Requested” and enclose a letter with the required text.

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**Required text** The following text is required in this letter.

Enclosed is the eWIC card with your food benefits. You must set-up a PIN number to use the card at the store. The PIN number is for you and should not be shared with anyone.

The instructions for setting up your eWIC card PIN number is being mailed separately.

You must have your eWIC Card with you to purchase foods.

Please call us at (*insert telephone number*) to make an appointment as soon as possible. You must come to the WIC clinic for an appointment to continue receiving checks. If you do not complete this appointment within 30 days, you will need to start the application process over again.

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**Required enclosures** The following enclosures must be sent with the letter:

- eWIC Card
  - Family Food Benefits list
  - List of approved vendors
- 

**Replacing benefits** The initial set of benefits may be reissued if they are reported as not received within seven days from the issue date. The applicant must come to the WIC clinic to receive a replacement card. Do not mail a second card.

Note: See Policy 225.65 for more information.

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## Mailing “Using Your eWIC Card”

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<b>Policy</b>	WIC eWIC Cards may be mailed to a pregnant woman who was precertified using referral data if she is the only member of her household receiving WIC benefits.
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<b>Procedure</b>	Mail the WIC eWIC Card in a separate envelope from the Using your eWIC Card brochure; do not mail the brochure and the eWIC card in the same envelope. Both envelopes must be stamped Return Service Requested. Enclose a letter with the required text.
<hr/>	
<b>Required text</b>	<p>The following text is required in the letter:</p> <p>Enclosed is the “Using Your eWIC Card” brochure. The brochure explains how to set the PIN and use the card at the store. You must set-up a PIN number to use the card at the store. The PIN number is for you and should not be shared with anyone.</p> <p>You will receive the eWIC card in the mail soon. Once you receive the card and set-up the PIN, take the eWIC card to the store when you shop. It is the only identification you need when you use the eWIC card.</p> <p>Bring this card every time you come to the WIC clinic. It is the only identification you need to pick up WIC benefits.</p>
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<b>Enclosures</b>	The enclosures include the “Using Your eWIC Card” brochure and letter.

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## Precertification in the WIC Clinic

### Introduction

The precertification procedure in the WIC clinic follows the same steps except that the **eWIC card** is sent home with the applicant.

### Procedure in the clinic

The table below describes the procedure in the WIC clinic.

Step	Action								
1	<p>Review income data and use the table below to determine the next step.</p> <table> <tr> <th>IF...</th><th>THEN...</th></tr> <tr> <td>Income eligible <u>and</u> no family members are on WIC</td><td>Create a record for a new family in the data system.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Income eligible <u>and</u> family members are on WIC</td><td>Retrieve the family's record and update the woman's status to include being a participant</td></tr> <tr> <td>Not income eligible</td><td>Follow Policy 215.08.</td></tr> </table>	IF...	THEN...	Income eligible <u>and</u> no family members are on WIC	Create a record for a new family in the data system.	Income eligible <u>and</u> family members are on WIC	Retrieve the family's record and update the woman's status to include being a participant	Not income eligible	Follow Policy 215.08.
IF...	THEN...								
Income eligible <u>and</u> no family members are on WIC	Create a record for a new family in the data system.								
Income eligible <u>and</u> family members are on WIC	Retrieve the family's record and update the woman's status to include being a participant								
Not income eligible	Follow Policy 215.08.								
2	<p>Complete the data entry.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> A CPA must assign the food package. If the applicant has a food sensitivity or intolerance to any foods in the WIC food package, a CPA must contact the applicant to identify an appropriate food package.</p>								
3	Have the participant review <b>Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant</b> , and obtain the parent/guardian's signature.								
4	<b>Issue benefits</b> according to standard procedure.								
5	<p>If she is new to WIC,</p> <p>Provide education about how to use the <b>eWIC card</b>,</p> <p>Provide the <b>Family Food Benefits list</b> and <b>WIC Approved Foods booklet</b>,</p> <p>Provide a list of vendors in the area, and</p> <p>Issue the <b>eWIC card</b>.</p>								
6	Schedule a certification appointment.								
7	<p>Ask if she has a medical appointment before her next WIC appointment.</p> <p><u>If yes</u>, give her a copy of the Nutrition Health History Card for Women and describe how WIC can use data from her medical provider at that appointment. Encourage her to ask her provider to record data on the card because this will save her time at her next appointment.</p>								

## Change in Categorical Status Before Certification

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<b>Introduction</b>	This section of policy describes what to do if a woman's categorical status changes before she returns for her certification appointment.
<b>Examples</b>	Examples of potential changes in categorical status include pregnancy loss and delivery.
<b>Procedure</b>	Certify the woman in her new categorical status (breastfeeding or postpartum) following the normal certification appointment process. This appointment must be completed face-to-face with her.

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## Certification Appointment Process

<b>Policy</b>	Pregnant women who were precertified must complete a certification appointment at the WIC clinic in order to continue receiving benefits.
<b>Using previous income data</b>	If the certification appointment is completed within 30 days of the precertification, it is acceptable to import the previous income determination data and use it.
<b>Benefit issuance</b>	<p>If possible, the certification appointment should occur in the same calendar month as the precertification, to avoid the need for benefit proration.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> Precertification was completed on 10/1 with benefits issued for October. The next certification appointment is on 10/26; benefits can be issued for November, December, and/or January based on the Food Benefit Issuance Period record in the woman's electronic record.</p>
<b>Failed appointments</b>	<p>If the woman does not return for the certification appointment, print a Notice of Termination form and mail it. Check the following reason for termination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Failure to reapply</li></ul> <p><u>Note:</u> Because this is a missed appointment for a pregnant woman, you must follow-up by phone or mail according to your agency policy. See Policy 215.23 for more information about missed appointments for pregnant women.</p>

## What You Need to Know About WIC & Your Pregnancy

<b>What is WIC?</b>	WIC is a food and nutrition education program for women, infants, and children. That's just what your family may need now with a new baby on the way. Good nutrition is important for a healthy pregnancy.
<b>What foods will you get?</b>	You will receive <b>benefits</b> to buy milk, cheese, eggs, juice, cereal and other whole grain options, dried legumes, peanut butter, fruits and vegetables.
<b>What else does WIC provide?</b>	WIC will help you have a healthy pregnancy. If you would like to know more about breastfeeding, WIC can answer questions. WIC will also help you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat better,</li> <li>• Stretch your food dollars, and</li> <li>• Find out where to get health care.</li> </ul>
<b>How can you get on WIC?</b>	You can apply for WIC right now! Here are the steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ask some questions about you,</li> <li>• You will review the form and sign it,</li> <li>• We will fax the form to the local WIC Program, and</li> <li>• WIC staff will review the form to see if you are eligible. The WIC staff will contact you if they have any questions, so make sure your address and phone number are correct.</li> </ul>
<b>What happens next?</b>	<p><b>If you are eligible for WIC</b>, you will get <b>eWIC card</b> in the mail in 5-7 days. Or, if you prefer, you can go to the WIC clinic to pick up the <b>card</b>. <b>Information on how to set up your PIN will be mailed separate from the card.</b></p> <p><b>If you are not eligible</b>, you will receive a notice in the mail. Call the WIC Program with questions or to make an appointment to reapply.</p>
<b>How do you stay on WIC?</b>	You must keep a WIC appointment soon to stay on WIC. See the back of this page for more information.

## Make A WIC Appointment Soon!

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### At your next appointment

You must come to the WIC clinic for an appointment to continue receiving WIC benefits. Call to make this appointment right away. The next WIC clinic in your area may be soon. At the clinic, WIC staff will:

- Check your proof of income, address, and identity,
- Weigh and measure you,
- Check your blood level of iron,
- Ask questions about your health, and
- Discuss breastfeeding.

Note: If you have a medical appointment before you come to WIC, ask your provider to record your height, weight, blood test results and other pregnancy data on the purple card, Nutrition Health History Card for Women. Bring this card to your WIC appointment. WIC can use this health information instead of collecting it again.

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### For children in your family

Make an appointment for your children who are younger than 5 years old because they may be eligible for WIC, too.

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### Call WIC!

Call your local WIC Program to:

- Make an appointment,
- Ask questions about using your eWIC card, or
- Check on what you need to bring for proof of income, address, and identity.

You can reach the state WIC office at 1-800-532-1579.

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- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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**Iowa WIC Program**

**2/16**

## Sample MOU With a Referral Agency

Memorandum of Understanding  
between  
[WIC Contractor]  
and  
[Referral Agency]  
to Expedite WIC Enrollment of Pregnant Women

This agreement is entered into by and between the [WIC Contractor] and [Referral Agency] to enhance access to WIC services for pregnant women. The parties agree to cooperate in expediting enrollment for pregnant women identified by [Referral Agency] as potentially eligible for WIC services.

[Referral Agency] will:

1. Limit the staff involved in this activity to those who have received the required training about the WIC Program, its goals, and the procedures for expediting services.
2. Promote the WIC Program to agency clients by providing verbal information and written information supplied by the [WIC Contractor] describing eligibility guidelines and services.
3. Collect the required data on the standard form developed by the state WIC program and transmit it via fax to the [WIC Contractor].
4. Obtain each applicant's signature on the document, Your Rights and Responsibilities as WIC Participant, and in the signature block providing notice that an appointment must be completed to continue receiving benefits.
5. Encourage all applicants to make an appointment for certification as soon as possible.
6. Promote breastfeeding as the optimal infant feeding method.
7. Provide for the confidentiality of WIC applications while in the referral agency's possession and mail the original documents to the WIC office as soon as possible. [Referral Agency] staff will not disclose to any third party any information received from applicants.

[WIC Contractor] will:

1. Provide training for the referral agency staff regarding data collection, confidentiality, how to use the eWIC card, applicant rights and conditions of participation, and basic information about the WIC Program.
2. Provide the required forms, outreach materials, and education materials about using the eWIC card.
3. Attest to the woman's eligibility for program services.
4. Create the woman's electronic record, assign a food package, assign the eWIC card and issue benefits.
5. Mail the eWIC card to the applicant's home address and enclose a statement that certification must be completed before any more WIC foods can be issued.
6. Make follow-up telephone calls or send a follow-up letter if there are questions about income eligibility.
7. At the certification visit, complete the normal WIC certification process and provide the initial nutrition education contact.
8. Follow-up with the applicant if she fails to complete her certification appointment.

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## Sample MOU With a Referral Agency, Continued

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### Essential Terms and Conditions:

This agreement may be modified through written amendments executed by both parties and approved by the appropriate program officials.

This agreement shall take effect on [date] and will continue thereafter until termination by either party by giving written notice to the other at least 30 (thirty) days before the effective date of such termination.

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Name of WIC Coordinator  
Title  
[WIC Contractor]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of contact person at referral agency  
Title  
[Referral Agency}

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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